

REPORT OF A VISIT TO THE UNITED STATES UNDER THE
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Visiting the United States for a month is like reading only the preface of a complex but compelling work: it is titillating and tentative, offering the prospect of experiences which its brevity necessarily denies. Inevitably my stay was hectic and for two basic reasons. First I had not been to the United States for twenty years, and therefore did not suffer from the familiarity which makes the seasoned visitor insensitive. My ambit was therefore wide and my curiosity compelling. Secondly my interests were threefold. I wanted to talk to historians concerned with plantation society in the New World; to theologians involved in constructing a "black theology"; and to public figures devoted to reconstructing black society.

In planning my itinerary I found the Council for Leaders and Specialists particularly painstaking, sensitive and efficient. This was only to be expected. But I was pleasantly taken back by their warm, debonair and almost intimate manner, especially that of Mr. Wright Baker who combines the quick acumen of an entrepreneur with the ingratiating charm of a patrician.

My itinerary began in Washington and ended in New York. In Washington I had conversations with a number of people concerned with the Caribbean whom Elizabeth Brinton arranged for me to meet. I made the routine pilgrimage to the usual shrines of Power. I visited Georgetown University and gave two lectures there, one on Guyanese history and the other on the quest for a Guyanese identity.

Then I went on to Howard University where I met the personnel of the Department of History, gave a lecture on "Slave Rebellions in Guyana", and was interviewed for half an hour in the library by a team from the Voice of America.

From Washington I flew to Laurence, Kansas, to see Professor Richard Sheridan who writes Caribbean history with insight and welcomes Caribbean visitors with enthusiasm. I lectured to his graduate students on "Race Relations in Guyana" and spent two days discussing with student leaders there the academic agonies of the American University system. Fittingly, I was able to get some insight into the racial problems of the mid-west from my old friend, the Rev. Otto Zingg, who ten years ago had been a Presbyterian Minister in Guyana and is now a Chaplain to Kansas University. He got together a number of highly articulate people with sharply opposing viewpoints, set the ball rolling among them and in a short time I had an excellent sampling of racial attitudes in that area.

My next stop was Atlanta where I held a seminar with fellow academics arranged by Dr. Richard Long of the University of Atlanta; lectured to the Institute of the Black World, a fascinating collection of black intellectuals who bring to their disciplined and strategic radicalism meticulous research; talked to the Professors at the Interdenominational Theological Centre about black religious consciousness in the Caribbean; met a number of distinguished Atlantans brought together by an old West Indian friend of mine, and interviewed a corresponding number of white people including one of the "Daughters of the Southern Confederacy", still, I may add, belatedly finishing off the Civil War.

New Orleans, as I had been led to expect, provided visual, vocal, and culinary delights, as well as intellectual stimulation. I gave impromptu lectures on aspects of Guyanese history to students at Dillard's and Xavier Universities, the former black, cautious and conservative; the latter black, creative and eclectic; met, after some initial problems, leaders of a variety of black organisations and sat next to, and learned a great deal from, a distinguished and knowledgeable Roman Catholic Prelate on the plane to San Francisco.

In San Francisco I teamed up with three other visitors under this same scheme and we were all particularly well treated. The hospitality was sumptuous, and the arrangements balanced adroitly between sightseeing and business. I had some useful conversations with historians and theologians, both black and white, at Berkeley, and spent an evening in the company of some thirty Chinese from Guyana, whose personalities were split between a worldly success impossible at home and a yearning for home impossible to shake off. I also gave a long interview to the editor of a black newspaper whose questions ranged from General Amin's policy to the Asians to Mr. Burnham's attitude to Black Power.

New Hampshire succeeded San Francisco on the itinerary and there I was housed and entertained by my friend and former colleague, Professor Robert Dishman. He drove me through the New England countryside at its most beautiful, put on a party for me to meet his colleagues and there we discussed the possibility of staff exchanges. From New Hampshire I went down to Boston where I had a

number of interviews with Harvard scholars interested in black history and Caribbean studies, held a seminar at the Afro-American Study Centre of Boston University, visited Professor Robert Rothberg at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology to discuss with him his projected book on "The Black Diaspora".

In Albany, New York State, I was the guest of another old friend, Robert Manley, formerly of the University of Puerto Rico, who organised a lunch for me to meet historians and social scientists from Albany College, and introduced me to some of the most significant black men in New York State politics. He also was kind enough to drive me down to New York City.

In New York I secured a Press Pass to the United Nations, attended a number of receptions and cocktail parties given by various Embassies, met scholars from the Institute of International Education, gave three lectures at City College, visited Medger Evers College and Columbia University. I was invited as the representative from Guyana to the Annual Dinner of the Black Academy of Arts and Sciences where I met a number of distinguished West Indians and black Americans with some of whom I have maintained contact. Most interesting of all, a former contemporary of mine at the University of the West Indies, organised a meeting with West Indians who hold leading positions in the community life of New York and this proved to be one of the really revealing sessions of the whole tour. I left New York for London on the 12th of October.

The visit was valuable chiefly for the contacts I made. Some of the academics whom I met showed a strong desire to visit